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PUBLIC BATHS.

SECOND ANNUAL MEETING OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR PROMOTING
HYGIENE AND PUBLIC BATHS, BALTIMORE, MD., MAY 13-15, 1913.

By J. A. NYDEGGER, Surgeon, United States Public Health Service.

The second regular annual meeting of the American Association for Promoting Hygiene and Public Baths, occurred at Baltimore, Md., May 13, 14, and 15, 1913, the sessions being held in first branch council chamber of the city hall.

Dr. Simon Baruch, of New York, president of the association, presided. The mayor of Baltimore, in a brief address, tendered the delegates the freedom of the city, and assured them that he was in thorough sympathy with the idea of providing public baths for the people in our large cities, and explained that Baltimore was putting many civic improvements into effect at the present time.

Mr. Arthur M. Crane, of New York, delivered a highly interesting address on the subject "The safeguarding and care of indoor swimming pools," in which he emphasized the great need for filtering the water used in the pools. He also recommended the use of hypochlorite of lime. He said that a pound costs only 2 cents and that this is sufficient to destroy the bacteria in the water of the largest swimming-pool tanks. He advocated a thorough medical examination of the bathers and then a generous application of soap and water before permitting them to enter the pool, to prevent possible contamination from the use of these baths. Necessary as adjuncts to the above, he emphasized the importance of light by day and night, the use of scum gutters around the pools, and a sufficient number of attendants. He suggested the advantage of boys' bathing without clothing, but stated that in cases where this was not practicable the suits, which should be the property of the bathhouse, should be sterilized by steam each time after having been used.

Dr. Baruch delivered an address which was characterized by a general censure of the policy of many of our largest cities in expending vastly more funds on buildings and other public improvements than they spend for the prevention of disease. He gave figures showing that in many of the largest cities in the United States there

is but one-tenth as much money spent annually for the prevention of disease as there is for other public purposes. He also strongly advocated the placing of public baths in the public schools, declaring that the use of baths in schools would present a valuable factor in education.

Dr. John S. Fulton, secretary of the State Board of Health of Maryland, also spoke, and gave an interesting description of the origin and development of the public-bath system of Baltimore. It began with a few boys who were periodically chased away from the water by policemen. The interest which has been taken is evidenced by the installation of four large public indoor baths, modern in equipment, a large swimming pool in one of the public parks, a number of portable public baths, the invention of a Baltimore minister, which can be transported from place to place where most needed, in addition to a number of beach baths, under sanitary and police supervision, all in the course of a few years' time.

The forenoon and afternoon sessions of the second day of the meeting were taken up with the presentation of the various papers dealing with public baths, their hygiene, and the benefits derived therefrom in a public-health way.

Mr. Leonard Mason, of Newark, N. J., read a paper on "Indoor and outdoor swimming pools." He emphasized their importance as a means of promoting habits of personal cleanliness, comfort, and public health. In addition to the primary importance of the shower or cleanliness baths, he considered the subject of swimming pools from the standpoint of the recreation worker and physical educator, declaring that the delights of swimming can not be exaggerated, and that it gives an added interest to life. The methods of construction of swimming pools and methods of operating them were dealt with. He urged that in their construction the best known and most approved appliances for keeping the water clean and pure should be used. He spoke also of the importance of competitions in aquatic sports for town and city championships, claiming that such exhibitions develop wholesome rivalry centered about the swimming pool, thus making the public bath a community center, and educational, both socially and morally. He expressed the belief that the whole subject links the idea of the promotion of public health with that of public recreation.

Dr. William Royal Stokes, bacteriologist for the State of Maryland, discussed briefly "The sanitation of indoor swimming pools." He held that the most important factor in the sanitation of the swimming pool is an unpolluted condition of the water. He said that pollution may result if an impure water is used for filling the pool, and that a second source results from the many bacteria washed off

from the surface of the body of the bathers. The main danger from bacterial pollution arises, however, when the bacteria come from patients in the early stages of the intestinal diseases, or from individuals who are convalescent, or who may be the carriers of the bacteria of the various intestinal diseases. He believed the chief danger of pollution was from the individuals who had recovered from typhoid fever, and who might at times harbor the germ of this disease in the intestine for months or even years. The same would apply also to cases of walking typhoid. He claimed that the remedy to correct the pollution was simple and easily applied, and he strongly advocated the use of calcium hypochlorite to keep the water free from pathogenic bacteria. He believed the water of indoor swimming pools did not require refiltration in addition to the use of calcium hypochlorite, which had been used so successfully in the water supply of Baltimore to prevent typhoid fever, unless it might be for the purpose of removing the sediment in suspension. The calcium hypochlorite should be used in the proportion of 1.5 parts to 1,000,000 parts of water.

Mrs. Mary Jacobson, of Newark, N. J., presented an interesting and instructive paper on "Campaign work for promoting public baths." The talk was illustrated with lantern slides. Those interested in the subject in Newark were constantly confronted with the imperative need for sanitary bathing facilities for the poor and also soon learned to know of this same need for the mechanic and his family, who could not afford to pay high rents. The outcome was that after years of patient and persistent work in interesting organizations in the city, municipal bodies, and later State officials, favorable legislation was finally enacted providing for an appropriation of \$250,000 for erecting in Newark a large public bath, which for beauty of architecture, perfection of sanitation, and convenience of management is not excelled by any other bathhouse in this country. The opening of this bath for the use of the public in the near future will fill a much-felt want and will promote greatly the health and recreation of the masses in this densely populated city. A society is furthering the interests of public health by recommending the abolition of bathing suits and the substitution of sheets, which are less insanitary, more lasting, and less expensive to launder. The workers feel that the public baths have a real place in the life of a city and are productive of much good.

Mr. H. C. Muller, of Trenton, N. J., following the previous speaker, made an address on "Tile; its sanitary and decorative value in the construction of public baths." He expressed the view that the construction of the pool and shower and approaches should be such that no corners or open seams or cracks are present. He claimed

that decorated tiling, properly laid, is durable and presents a polished surface easily kept clean and one always presentable and attractive.

Dr. August Windolph, of New York, spoke on "The American bath; its location, plan, and construction." He said that although the earliest records showed that public baths were first introduced in this country in 1850, but little attention was paid to the subject until 1890, though a few isolated buildings of the river-type bath, poor and crude imitations of European models, had been used previous to that date; that it was Dr. Simon Baruch, of New York, who started a movement that may be described as a new social spirit, a civic renaissance, in introducing the rain or shower bath; and that it is only within the last decade that bath building has shown systematic development. Each municipality, heretofore, had approached and solved the problem after its own fashion. He claimed that the customary European practice of choosing a site of sufficient dimensions to furnish most of the bathing facilities in one place is not thought to be desirable in this country, because the site selected is usually in a densely populated part of the city, the price of the site is high, and the public funds will not usually permit a large initial expenditure. He stated that American baths are not characterized by elaborate halls, staircases, and rooms devoted to various other purposes than bathing; also that we have eliminated steam, hot air, and vapor baths. He claimed that the combined pool and shower variety of bath has up to the present time been the most favored by our municipalities, and that it has many advantages of economy, practicability, and simplicity which have appealed to the authorities. He thought that in a small city the shower equipment is the most suitable. He believed that in construction a bath must be considered from the standpoint of sanitation, being a valuable asset for all large cities, tending to the elevation of both the moral and physical well-being of the community.

A number of brief reports by members of the association on the progress of the public bath movement in various cities showed a healthy growth and a great increase in attendance over preceding years. Hope was expressed that much public interest might be aroused, following the present meeting, and that thus a great expansion of the public bath system, for which the time is ripe, might be accomplished.

H. D. Tutwiler, commissioner of recreation, Indianapolis, Ind., gave an interesting address on the method adopted there to give the citizens an opportunity for aquatic sports. An abandoned gas tank, attached to a city fire plug, constitutes at present the public swimming pool of the city. Before this pool was established there were more deaths due to drowning in the vicinity of that city than there were at Atlantic City. He said the special feature of the Indianapolis system is that public recreation of all kinds, including public baths

and public playgrounds, is under the commissioner of recreation, and that much good had resulted from this arrangement. A launch provided for the purpose of patrolling the two confluent streams near the city, manned by life-savers, was the means of saving many lives during the great flood of last spring. Besides carrying food to several hundred marooned people, it conveyed at least 800 to 1,000 others to places of safety. Following his talk, Mr. Tutwiler exhibited an interesting series of motion pictures of the public recreation grounds, etc., of Indianapolis.

Dr. Wilson Burdick, director of the public athletic league, Baltimore, delivered an interesting address on the "Relation of public athletic work to public baths," and told of the cooperation between the league and the public bath commission of Baltimore, laying particular emphasis on the medals which were offered by the league for proficiency in swimming.

Dr. William Hale, superintendent of public baths of Brooklyn, N. Y., spoke on the general topic, "A municipal department for baths and gymnasiums." Dr. Hale offered many valuable suggestions as to how such a department should be conducted.

The morning session was marked by a discussion on the relative value of pool and shower bathing. Dr. Baruch, president of the association, maintained that the shower bath was the only hygienically cleansing bath, and that the pool was chiefly valuable in furnishing means for recreation and exercise. While this point met with general approval it was also maintained that the pool was a most desirable feature of a public bath, as it offered a strong inducement to some to take the shower who probably could not be induced to take it under any other circumstances.

Miss Catharine F. Mehrtens, president Women's Life Saving League, New York, spoke on "The importance of swimming and life-saving instructions to women." Instruction in this subject, especially for working women, employed during the day, seems to have received its first serious consideration in New York City from the league. Membership in this organization, which is only three years old, has reached a thousand. The league conceived the idea that swimming must be taken up, sooner or later, as a branch of elementary education in every locality. The points for the consideration of every community are the confidence that swimming gives the individual, and its pleasure-giving and health-giving qualities. No other form of athletics gives such all-round exercise and is so well adapted to women and girls. It is especially advantageous to those who have long hours in the office or at the desk or counter, and is a beneficial recreation. Such health-giving athletics tend to the moral and social uplifting of women.

Mr. Todd, superintendent of public baths of the Borough of Manhattan, New York City, spoke briefly of the marked progress made in the advancement of public bathing during the past year in the second largest city in the world. In the year 1912 the borough had in operation 12 interior and 6 floating free municipal baths, and 6,375,133 free baths were given. The average cost per bath was a little over 3 cents. One of the most difficult problems confronting the city during the last year was that of persuading the people to patronize the baths. Steps had to be taken to make the baths popular by establishing in them well equipped gymnasiums and other forms of amusements. In further pursuance of this plan every possible effort is used to make the appearance of the building attractive and inviting. Arrangements have been perfected for the construction of larger and more perfect indoor sanitary swimming pools in various sections of the borough. Many new changes in the method of operation of the baths have been considered and will be put into force.